

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

MARCH 1975.

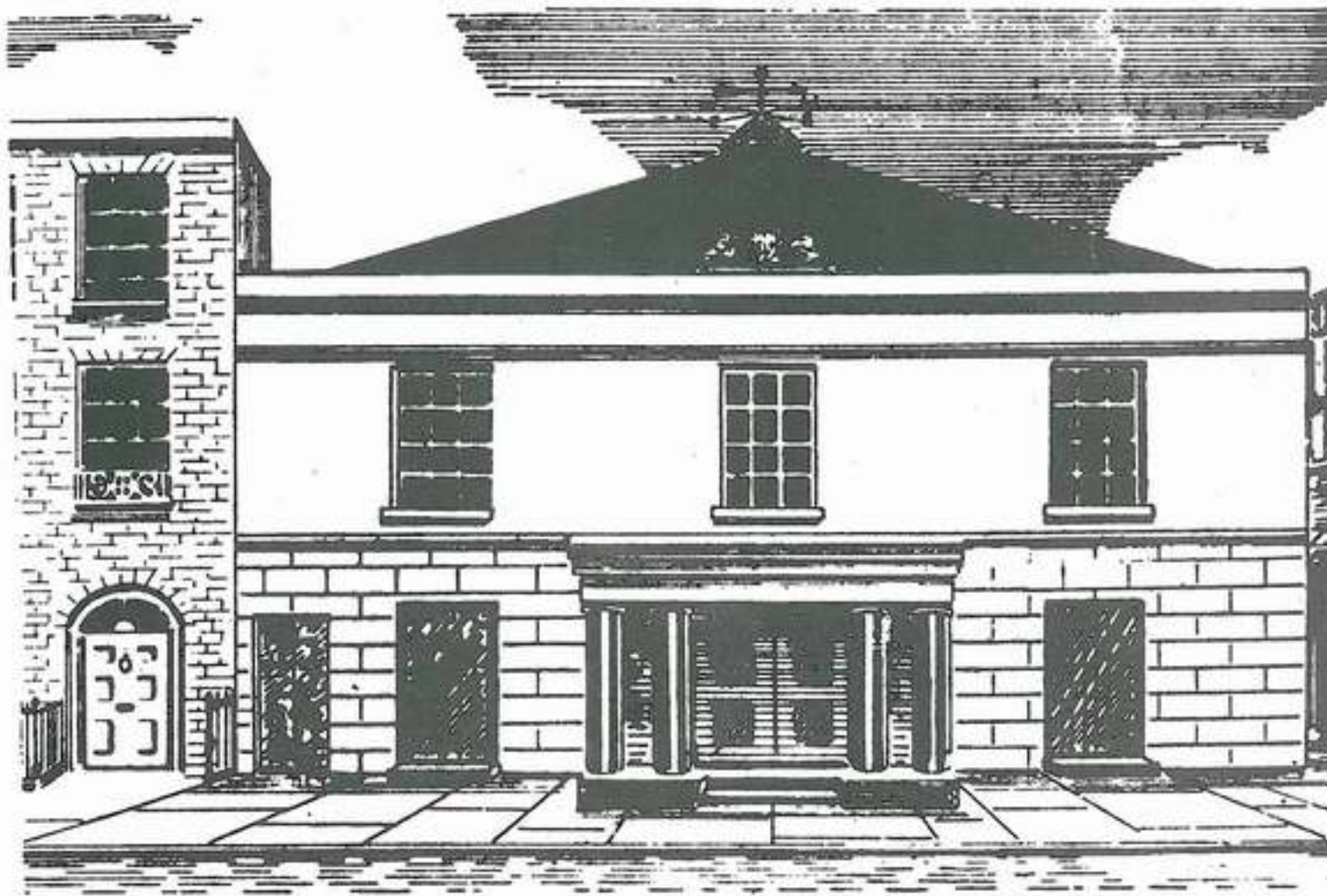
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VOL. 4. NO. 3.

**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . . ! James Connolly

THE FOURTH SIEGE OF LIMERICK



THE OLD THEATRE ROYAL, LIMERICK

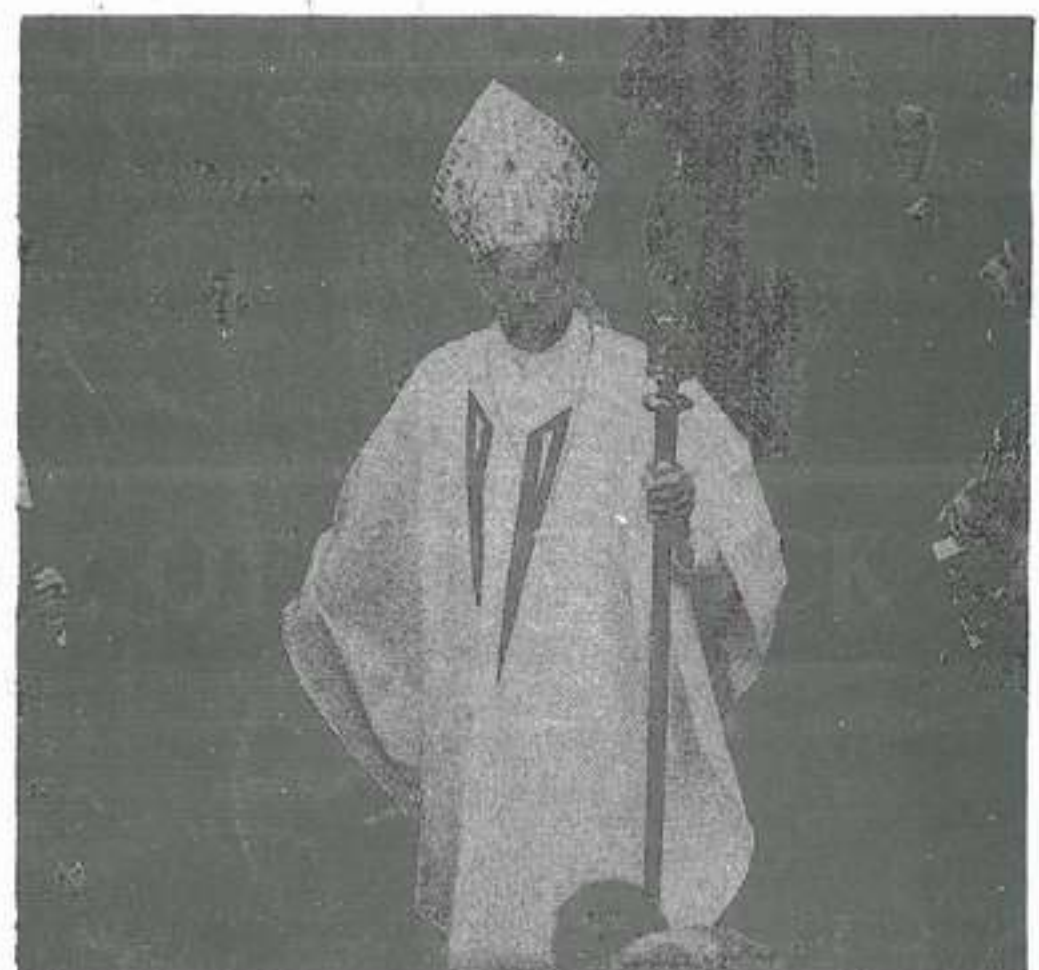


THE LEGENDARY LIMERICK CHARACTER, STEVE "MACK"

THE COALITION



THE KEYS OF NEW ORLEANS



RAT A LA MODE

by **DERMOT McEVOY**

I had thought of awarding my Medal of the Month to Mrs. Rita Clancy, a mother of eight who farms at Prospect Hill, Limerick, for the generous gift of one of her livestock to the (Fine Gael) Mayor of Limerick, His Worship Alderman Kennedy. From later intelligence, to which I am indebted to the *Limerick Leader* and *The Truth in the News*, I find that the gift of just one of her livestock — a rat — was not so munificent after all as she and her husband, Thomas, catch rats at the rate of four a day and that, at peak, they've a stock of 107. What's one rat, and a small one at that, out of 107! So Mrs. Clancy will have to be content with a "highly commended". The Medal goes to the Mayor who promised to see "if the Corporation can cure the problem". Even a townie like myself knows you can cure bacon pigs, but I never knew you could cure a rat! Mind you, I have reservations about the method proposed by His Worship: to re-house the Clancy's. But what would happen their livestock? Are they to go to strangers? Will they be as well looked after?

Mrs. Clancy's gift — of a bagful — could, for instance, have been fricasseed by the chef at the Glentworth and served with garnishings at the banquet of the Limerick county executive of Macra na Feirme where the Bishop of Limerick, the Most Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Newman, extolled the unique quality of life to be found in rural areas. Dr. Newman stressed the importance of a "sense of community" which he claimed is not to be found in the larger centres of population. But is there no sense of community, with rats thrown in, on Prospect Hill? I'll bet there is — and that the people on His Lordship's doorstep will know which rat — medal or no medal — to vote for when the time comes to disinfect the mayoral parlour. They won't vote, I trust, for *rattus Norvegicus*, the brown, common (Fine Gael) rat, or for *rattus rattus*, the black (Fianna Fail) rat that carries the plague. Or even, indeed, for the rats' camp-follower, the *mus demesticus*, the Stevie Coughlan-type tame house mouse. But that's enough about rats and mice. We might be glad to eat 'em yet same as they did in the Paris of the Commune.

Let's instead take a look at the Norsemen, who used to raid Northern England for cattle and women, are now coming in droves to raid the shops in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Richard West, who is married to Irish journalist Mary Kenny, recently reported that the Norwegians go staggering on to ships home with bags of clothes, shoes and toys. Beer in Norway costs £1 a pint (at the exchange rate the British and Irish get) and Norwegians look on Newcastle as an alcoholic's paradise. He quotes a Norwegian: "I order a big whiskey in Newcastle and I put a pound on the bar and I think to myself maybe I get some small coin back in the change. But the barman gives me a pile of change, almost my whole pound back". This Stavanger man said: "I thought if we stayed out of the EEC we would be poor. Now look at us and look at Denmark (which voted to join) ... and Denmark has 10 per cent unemployment".

Not to mind Denmark ... look at Limerick! Look at West Limerick now screaming at being excluded from benefit under the EEC Disadvantaged Areas Scheme — facing a net loss of over £5 million during the next two years from EEC funds for "development"! Riddle me that me Trinity scholar!

Yet, if the hardship and the poverty were shared, we'd gladly make the sacrifices demanded in this mad capitalist world but as author Thomas J. O'Hanlon says in his book, *"The Irish"*, which I quoted from last month: "Ireland is a poor country and it crucifies its poor: mental illness is the highest in Europe: there is a high consumption of tranquilising drugs in Dublin: 11 per cent of disposable income goes for alcohol". And talking of alcohol, I spoke to a young man opposite me in the train from Limerick to Ennis not so long ago. He was a nurse at Clonmel Mental Hospital and he told

me they rarely had fewer than 120 to 130 alcoholics under treatment there at any one time. How many came back, I asked. Ninety-nine point ninety-nine circulating, was his answer. Now, over to Dr. Newman at the Macra banquet at the Glentworth (where little lemonade was on the table).

Referring to the country areas, he said that a survey showed the emergence of bachelor groups "where there was very little social mixing and very little social diversification, only to club together and drink". Why no community centres for cards, chess, billiards, dancing and discussion groups, My Lord? Answer: there's no money in them for the speculative builder in city, town, or country. And money is the God of the new Ireland where "success" is measured in terms of money: the "good" school for the children of the rich no matter how dull and unpromising: academic training for the same children, technical training for the children of the poor. Someone — Limerick — has a lot to answer for, My Lord.

Long ago, Matthew Arnold, in his essay "Sweetness and Light", wrote of London "with its unutterable hideousness and with its internal cancer of *publice egestas, privatim opulentia* (public squalor and private affluence) — to use the words which Sallust puts into Cato's mouth about Rome — unequalled in the world". For London and ancient Rome, substitute Dublin and Limerick, My Lord, and Your Worship

Is there any way out of all this? I fear not, because the Doctor Newmans in concert in Rome at what was called the Second Vatican Council did away with the only place I ever wanted to go to — Limbo! In the Penny Catechism, long since superseded by the new theology, Limbo was described as, "A place or state of rest where some souls suffer for a time before they can go to Heaven". Perhaps the new Limbo is Prospect Hill — rats and all! That's the only consolation I can offer Mrs. Clancy and her suffering neighbours. As for myself I'm inclined to follow the line of Kingsley Martin's father, the Rev. Basil Martin, who "the older he grew, believed more and more in less and less".

Apropos my note last month that under the aegis of Richie Ryan it can cost a couple £8 a week MORE in Income Tax to get married than, shall we say? not to, and Dr. Newman's encouraging words to young farmers to get married before they're enfeebled, a friend reminds me that sexual morality is a class affair; that deviating from the norm is a luxury that only the middle and upper classes can afford; that the norm has always been hypocritical, that it is not only the respectable and prosperous who make mistakes in what John Stuart Mill called the lottery of marriage, in which

..... whoever is in a state of mind to calculate chances calmly and value them correctly is not likely to purchase a ticket.

Upper — or middle-class errors are cushioned by varying degrees of comfort. For the rest, the children of "one-parent families", for example, they suffer every economic, educational and social disadvantage, the worst housing, the worst food. Morality, how are ye!

But, once more, not to end on too sombre a note. Mrs. Clancy, why don't you hyphenate your name and become Geoghegan-Clancy and be a T.D.? If it's good enough for Galway, it'll surely do for Limerick ... and there's a fatter class of rat — and fat cats too — in Leinster House. Much virtue in a hyphen.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ...

Doctors and Money

The "Irish Medical Times" is the country's most widely read medical publication. The weekly paper is posted free of charge to every doctor in the Republic. On its masthead the newspaper describes itself as "The Independent Newsweekly For The Irish Doctor" but, as one recent issue (January 10th) shows, its "independence" does not stray very far from the narrow self-interest of the medical profession.

Money and not medical ethics or the health care of the people appears to be the overriding concern of the paper. Three front-page articles set out the doctors' naked pursuit of mammon on three different fronts. The lead story does not beat about the bush in putting the case for an increase in the fees of general practitioners operating the General Medical Services (the "National Health" or "blue" card system):

An immediate offer by the Minister for Health of £1.25 basic surgery fee could end the present deadlock with the profession and prevent a serious breakdown in the General Medical Services. This is a view of a number of doctors who say that a realistic offer such as this by the Minister would be a compromise between the profession's demand for a £2.00 basic surgery fee and the Arbitrator's award of 90p. Such an offer by the Minister coupled with extra concessions such as continuation of the privileges for temporary D.M.O.'s would very likely be accepted by the profession.

In their present dispute with the Minister for Health the doctors are being represented by two bodies, the Irish Medical Association and the Irish Medical Union. The I.M.A. has adopted the traditional approach of doctors to the question of seeking more money by its efforts to cloak its campaign with the usual "medical ethics" and "professional dignity" double-talk. The Medical Union, on the other hand, has made little attempt to disguise its objectives and has been making militant noises designed to further frighten the Minister. The lead story takes up the different attitudes of the two groups:

The consequences could be disastrous, especially if the I.M.A. proceed with plans for mass resignation of their members, and if the militant action being pursued by the Medical Union is escalated, and would result in very serious hardship to medical card holders. Medical Union members feel that they have been forced by the Minister into their course of industrial action which they were very loathe to undertake ... The I.M.A., however, believe that a breach of contract with the Health Boards by doctors in the General Medical Services is undesirable, but they feel that ... the obvious course of action is resignations in prime target areas - specially selected areas where there would be general accord between Medical Union and I.M.A. members.

The article goes on to state that the I.M.A. is believed to be opposed to industrial action on the lines being pursued by the Medical Union and that a number of Medical Union members had complained that the I.M.A.'s "pussy footing" had been responsible for the present split in the profession on the issue. The refusal of the doctors to have any tie with the Consumer Price Index like other workers is also referred to in the article.

The second front-page story dealing with doctors' money states: "Doctors participating in the Choice of Doctor Scheme are paid a fee of 80p for doing smear tests while their English counterparts qualify for a fee of £1.50 for doing the same tests". There is a saying in the North of England, "Where there's muck there's money", but it is obvious from the doctors' clinical attitude to smear tests that they have their own variation to the old saying: "Where there's cancer there's money and where there isn't cancer there's also money".

The third front-page story deals with the claim by consultants for "substantial" increases in sessional fees, pool

payments and salaries for hospital consultants. The Medical Union is seeking increases of one-third in consultant salaries and the claim has been lodged with the Department of Health. The I.M.A. has also submitted a separate claim of consultant medical staff to the Local Government Staff Negotiating Body.

An inside article titled, "Corish and the consultants: the next phase", a "special correspondent" states:

In fairness to MR. Corish it must be said that he has not attempted to force the issue with the family doctors. He has accepted the findings (of the arbitrator) ... Mr. Corish faced his Dunkirk last Spring when, driven by the consultant panzers, he withdrew his Government's proposals "for a period in order to avoid any danger to human life and to avoid confrontation with the medical profession".

The article describes how Corish, the Minister for Health, set up a Review Body to "examine and report on the system and rates of payment and conditions of employment of consultants in hospitals" and how the I.M.A. and the Medical Union refused to participate in its activities.

Naturally enough, there is no one word of criticism of the doctors' demands and tactics, but a casual reader of the Irish Medical Times, flicking through the pages, could be forgiven for getting a different impression from its headlines. For instance the headline, "A Motley Crew Of Pirates", does not refer to Irish consultants and doctors but to some members of the British medical profession who carry out abortions.

The writer of this article, Dr. Anthony Clare, describes a recent book on the subject of abortion as "a most disturbing account of greed and indifference". He calls some of the doctors involved a "gang of bloodless, avaricious and utterly unscrupulous characters". Dr. Clare did not, of course, mention the greed and indifference to be found among the avaricious and unscrupulous characters in his own profession nearer home.

Part of another headline is equally startling in its effect, "Pride And Vanity In The Midst Of Poverty". But, again, the article is not what it seems to be. The writer, Dr. John J. Beausang, is criticising the "pride and vanity of the upper privileged class", not in Ireland but in far away India. He writes:

India is a country of contrasts, the rich live in palaces, travel in expensive cars and are surrounded with slave labour ... The unfortunates have no hope of raising their status ... In one palace the scroll reads: "If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this".

A third headline, "A very degenerate genteelism", is also arresting. But, contrary to first impressions, the article does not deal with the restrictive practices or professional ethics of doctors; instead it comments on the subject of euphemisms. And the writer, Dr. M. Conway, is definitely not a militant member of the Medical Union having a go at some of his more circumspect colleagues in the Irish Medical Association. The conclusion, not surprisingly, comes down firmly on the side of the retention of euphemisms as a valuable part of the status quo:

Admittedly, euphemisms and genteelisms all cover up the plainer facts involved in truths. This is true for the world of the diplomat ... So long live euphemisms because they perpetuate hypocrisy - reduce enmities - keep insurance companies, politicians and commercial interests going and form the essence of religion as they keep sin alive and the penitent on his knees.

Dr. Conway modestly refrained from adding that

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To Orleans for the great Mardi Gras,
Travelled Arthur and Jere-mi-ah,
When the keys were presented,
Mayor Moon he commented;
"Tis a pity ye didn't bring Pa!!"

THE LIMERICK PRESS
AND CHICAGO

At the great Mardi Gras on a float,
Jeremiah to Arthur did quote,
Said: "I'll bet you a penny,
That b—d, Jim Kemmy,
Will scream Gluttony, Envy and Sloth!"

THE

KEYS OF NEW ORLEANS

PART ONE

Chicago does not loom too largely on the consciousness of most Limerick people. Knowledge of the "Windy City" could probably be reduced to a cluster of images — mainly formed through visits to the cinema — of Ma Leary and her kicking cow ... the Great Fire ... gangsters and the St. Valentine's Day massacre .. Mayor Richard Daley and the anti-Vietnam war demonstrators.

But as remote as Chicago and its life-style may seem from Limerick there is, at least, one direct link between the two cities. This link is mainly maintained through the relationship between the local press and the Chicago Limerickmen's Benevolent and Social Association. The history of this relationship is as turbulent and as fascinating as any human one.

The story of the "Chicago connection" has not been documented but a careful reader of the *Limerick Leader* and the *Limerick Weekly Echo* over the last five years would have little difficulty in putting all the pieces together. The "She loves me — she loves me not" character of the affair involving the three parties — the two local newspapers and the Chicago Limerickmen — has all the pathos and hilarity of a French farce.

Up to March 1971 the bigger, more prosperous *Leader* laid undisputed claim to the affections of the Chicago Association but over the last four years the humble "Little Sir Echo" has ousted its rival and taken over the much coveted suitor's role. The switch on this prestigious see-saw was brought about by an article written by Helen Buckley about the Chicago Limerickmen and published in the *Limerick Leader* on March 27th, 1971. Miss Buckley had accompanied Mayor Rory Liddy on his visit to his fellow-Limerickmen in Chicago. The fall-out from the subsequent article caused much distress among the exiles and irretrievably cut the *Leader's* link. As a result the paper was unceremoniously blown out of the "Windy City".

The *Echo* quickly seized on the opportunity to press home its own modest claims. Not content with merely "wiping the eye" of its rejected rival, the paper, under the shrewd editorship of Arthur Quinlan, fully exploited its new-found advantage. So, for the past four years, during the months of January and February, the pages of the *Echo* have been filled with detailed accounts of the continuing courtship. Without once mentioning the *Leader's* fall from favour, the *Echo*, with obvious satisfaction, has kept rubbing the salt into its rival's wounded heart.

This year was no exception, when the *Echo* once again outscouted and totally eclipsed the *Leader* on the Chicago and American scene. And Arthur Quinlan had the added bonus of the benefit of clergy as he went a-courting none other than Dr. Newman, the new Catholic Bishop of Limerick. The American exploits of Quinlan and Newman have been lovingly detailed, complete with pictures, in the *Echo* in recent weeks.

But an intriguing highlight of the trip did not take place in Chicago. In its edition of February 22nd the *Echo*, alongside the inevitable pictures, carried a front-page story headed: *Limerick's Double Honour — Keys of the City for Dr. Newman*. The article stated:

The coveted honour of being given the freedom of the city was this month granted in New Orleans to the Bishop of

Limerick, Dr. Jeremiah Newman, and the editor of the Echo, Arthur J. Quinlan. The ceremony took place at the residence of the Mayor of New Orleans, Moon Landrieu. Dr. Newman and Mr. Quinlan were each presented with the official scroll and symbolic key to the city. Said Mr. Quinlan: "As an Irishman I am deeply honoured".

The "big deal" made by the *Echo* of the "keys of the city" ceremony may have gulled a few unwary and uninitiated readers into believing that the event was of some momentous importance in Irish-American history. But anyone familiar with the politics and way of life of America will have accurately assessed the true significance of the ceremony.

The handing over of these keys recalls a similar scene depicted in Edwin O'Connor's novel, *The Last Hurrah*. The book describes the decline of Tammany Hall-type politics in Boston and is based on the life and political activities of James Michael Curley. As Mayor of Boston Curley's name became a symbol of political corruption and rascality.

In the book Curley is called Frank Skeffington and the "keys" ceremony takes place at the City Hall. The scene gives a much more authentic account of the importance accorded to these events by cynical American machine-Mayors than anything contained in the *Echo's* report:

Skeffington's offices were on the third floor ... Here three men waited for him: his chief secretary Tom Lacy and his two principal advisers, Sam Weinberg and old John Gorman.

"Gentlemen", Skeffington said. "A grand day to start the ball rolling. As well as heads. What's on the schedule, Tom?"

"Everything's fairly routine this morning, Governor", Lacy said, planting a small pile of papers upon the great mahogany desk. "These are all for your signature: the notices to all the heads of departments ... Then there's the press conference, after which you're giving the keys of the city to Fats Citronella ..."

Skeffington held up a hand. "One moment", he said. "A little amplification is required: who the hell is Fats Citronella? And why am I giving him the keys to the city?"

"He is a piano player, Governor. He's coming here this week for an engagement at the Poli and the theatre people were anxious to have him officially welcomed. Cuke Gillen set it up".

"And I agreed?"

"Yes, one day last week; Cuke caught you on the run. Actually", Lacy said "it may not be bad from the standpoint of publicity. Citronella's apparently quite well known".

"I imagine he is. It's been my experience that most of our great musicians are called Fats".

Lacy smiled. "No but this one seems to be the latest fad among the teenagers. He's what they call a bop-musician".

"Better and better", Skeffington said. "A bop-musician. Sam, you're a knowledgeable man. What do you know about bop-musicians?"

"It's nut stuff ... nut stuff", Weinberg repeated. "You know what it is, this bop? A bunch of hopped-up coons in purple suits blowing horns at a mob of high-school nitwits. The kids wear tight pants and run around screaming 'Crazy! Crazy!'"

"Oh, to be a boy again!" Skeffington sighed. "Sam, you're my bridge to the wonderful world of youth ... And I'm to

greet the idol of these splendid young people", Skeffington said dryly. "Charming. Still it's logical enough. A bop-musician: the Lord knows I've given keys to everyone else. Acrobats, aviators, professional wrestlers; I remember that on one occasion I even gave them to a dog".

A water spaniel", Weinberg said, gloomily reaching into memory, "from Hollywood. An acting dog".

Skeffington nodded. "Trixie the Spaniel. In my opinion one of the most intelligent actresses then residing on the West Coast. She was the property of an avaricious Mexican, whom she subsequently bit; I think the man died. All right, Tom, we'll give the keys to Mr. Citronella. Here the photographers stay around".

... Skeffington was standing in front of the big desk; by his side was a short, suety man with great horn-rimmed glasses, a crew cut and a sparse goatee. He was clad in sandals and a suit of electric green; one small hand held a golden clarinet, while the other was less exotically occupied in plucking ceaselessly at the seat of his trousers. Opposite the two men the photographers had gathered in a semicircle; Skeffington, a large bronze key in hand, was preparing for the presentation.

"Always a great pleasure to welcome a distinguished musician to our midst. Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast. I would imagine, Mr. Citronella", he said, with the barest flick of a glance in the direction of the photographers, "that you run up against the usual quota of savage breasts in the pursuit of your profession?"

The fat man blinked his eyes, smiled with a cheery vacancy, and uttered a soprano giggle. "Reet", he said. "Reep reet! You are strictly on the obbo - bobbo, Mister Mayor-man. But real strictly!"

"Splendid", said Skeffington imperturbably. Turning to the photographers he said, "I hope you're all listening, gentlemen: this is the way our English language is being constantly enriched. And now, Mr. Citronella, I give you the key to our fair city. Let it symbolise for you the entry into both the heart of our community and the affections of our people. I hope your stay here will be a source of mutual pleasure and profit; I hope you will see fit to return often.

Solemnly he awarded the key while flash-bulbs popped; Fats Citronella giggled again and gazed in admiration at the ornate and useless object in his hand.

The 'Hold me back' man

In its December edition the "Limerick Socialist" published an article concerning the transfer of a sub-post office from the Crescent to Clontarf Place. The location of the new office is a former pub owned by Paddy Carmody, well-known as a stevedore at the Limerick Docks. The pub lost its licence some years ago after a quantity of poteen had been found on the premises.

On January 16th Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, in the course of a reply to a Dail question on the sub-post office by Deputy S. Coughlan, stated that "one application from Mrs. Elizabeth Catherine Smyth was received and she was appointed". This brief extract from the Minister's reply was subsequently published in the *Limerick Leader*. This reply did not, of course, mention that Mrs. Smyth was the daughter of Paddy Carmody and a sister-in-law of Councillor Thady Coughlan.

Since the publication of the *Limerick Socialist* article on the sub-post office, Carmody has been going about blustering about what he intended to do to the people responsible. Despite the fact that over three months have passed since the article appeared, Carmody has failed to close the gap between words and action. But this should cause no surprise, as this is not the first time this has happened. (Maybe in a future edition we could induce the people concerned to describe how they dealt with some of Carmody's threats).

There is an old saying about people in glass-houses: Carmody has done well to keep it in mind over the last three months. This helps to explain his recent bashful behaviour since the sub-post office switch was made.

"Lemme at that crazy lock!" he said. Easily, naturally, unobtrusively, he placed a hand beneath Citronella's elbow, and together they began to move towards the door. "I understand you have a special appeal to the youth of the country, Mr. Citronella: a veritable Pied Piper in modern dress". Glancing at the gaudy clarinet, he said, "I implore you not to lure our young away with the magic music of your pipes".

A small, sharp-faced man who appeared to be with Citronella said suddenly, "Maybe you should give out with a few fast runs for the Mayor, Fats. A real snappy number. Maybe 'Pollywog Ramble'."

"No, no", Skeffington said. They had reached the door; he opened it. "That's a pleasure I must postpone due to the pressures of a busy schedule. Goodbye, Mr. Citronella. Come back again and often. You and your handsome instrument are always welcome to our city".

"Reet!" said Fats Citronella, and gave a final giggle. The door opened wide and he went out, followed by the photographers and the newspapermen. Skeffington simply drew back into his private office without so much as a nod of the head. The door shut tight behind Lacy and Adam was alone with his uncle. Skeffington pointed to a chair.

"Have a seat", he said. "Rest yourself. Most people seem to need a short rest after witnessing one of our official ceremonies for the first time. How did you like Mr. Citronella?"

"He seemed wholly unbelievable. I don't think I really understood just why he was given the keys to the city".

"A courteous gesture towards the distinguished visitor. A time-hallowed custom", Skeffington said urbanely, "although the word distinguished now takes in somewhat more territory than it did years ago. A necessary concession to the spirit of the times; even the British Government has been forced to give in to it. Their last knight over there was a jockey. Our problem is essentially the same, only instead of handing out knighthoods, we distribute keys. We used to give them to General Pershing, Lindbergh, Gertrude Ederle; now we give them to Fats Citronella. We've lowered our standards. Also", he said, "the quality of our keys. We're distributing a very poor grade of keys these days".

Adam laughed. I see. Do they open anything at all?"

"No, a blessed thing. If they did we'd all have to head for the hills. I'm perfectly willing to honour our distinguished visitors; it's another thing to trust them".

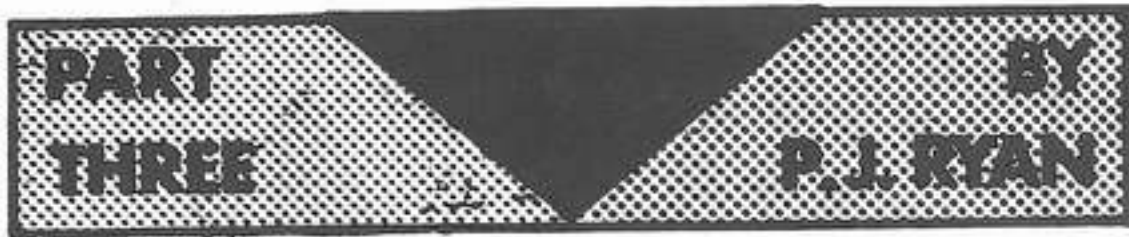
This dialogue gives some idea of how the unlikely-named Mayor of New Orleans, Moon Landrieu, must have viewed his two recent "freemen" from Limerick against the long line of previous "distinguished visitors". The *Echo* story, however, gives no clues about the identity of the people behind the scenes who pulled the political strings necessary for the lining up of the presentation of the keys, but the part played by the Archbishop of New Orleans in fixing the Catholic Mayor Moon was a key one.

Conscious of the tenuous links between Limerick and New Orleans and of the meretricious nature of the presentation of the tawdry, tinselly keys, Arthur Quinlan did his best to put some sort of dignified face on the proceedings. With his tongue firmly in his cheek, he said:

The Irish are still a strong force in New Orleans. During the Famine times and after it New Orleans was next only to New York in welcoming Irish immigrants. And the Irish influence is still a strong force there.

At this remove it is difficult to place the exact order given by Mayor Moon Landrieu to Arthur Quinlan and Dr. Newman in his "key" ratings but it is likely to be in a class somewhere between Trixie the Spaniel and Fats Citronella. But the presentation of the "ornate and useless" keys, tricked out with the "official scrolls", is a further stroke in the *Echo's* game of oneupmanship with the *Leader*.

(To be concluded).



THE LANES AND LAVATORIES

Off the main streets were hundreds of lanes. The houses in these lanes had no lavatories or indoor water supplies. Buckets were used as toilets and were emptied into Corporation cars at night, the poor widow giving of her mite and the larger or more affluent families giving of their abundance. A few water taps in each lane provided water supplies. The waste water from the houses flowed along the lane and into the gullies in the main streets.

The houses were lime-washed or papered and were lit by candles or paraffin lamps. On the outside they were limewashed in various colours, golden ochre being the favourite colour. Clothes lines were strung across the lanes but scarcely impeded pedestrians. Some of the lanes were paved with cobble stones and others with limestone flags from Liscannor, Co. Clare. All the footpaths in the main streets were flagged.

In many parts of the city were public drinking fountains which served a great public need. The earliest of these fountains was in a wall by the Dock Road; it was built in 1852 when the pumping station on the Shannon at Rhebogue was built to provide the city with its first public water works. Prior to these fountains, wooden and iron pumps with handles supplied water from wells. Another public amenity was the many drinking troughs for horses and cattle with a secondary trough underneath for sheep and dogs.

Public lavatories were usually located near the public fountains, the one provoking the use of the other. They were brick built and whitewashed with a band of tar near the ground. Inside was a long iron trough with rounded edges on which patrons sat and mused in wonder. On the walls were poetic inscriptions which showed that some of the writers were acquainted with the works of the poet Shakespeare. Because of their simple structure the toilets offered no scope to vandals. There were almost twenty-five of these toilets in the city, but as they were a denial of the divine origin of man, and offensive to pure Christian piety, they were gradually removed. The consequences of their removal was that twenty thousand annual visitors and fifty thousand citizens were denied the right to exercise a natural function. Visitors and citizens, like the early Christians had to suffer on, such is the power of priestcraft.

THE SLAUGHTER-HOUSES AND BACON FACTORIES

There were over a dozen slaughter-houses in the city where sheep and cattle were killed for food. A slaughter-house consisted of an enclosed yard with an open shed where the carcasses were hung up for cutting. In the case of sheep, the living animals surveyed the dead from the cutting of the throat to the removal of the woolly fleece. The entrails and dung from the slaughtered animals were piled up on one side of the yard until the stench from the rotting mass and the complaints of the neighbours compelled the abatement of the nuisance. The slaughter-houses were located or concealed in dead-end lanes and back streets of the city, and were infested with rats throughout the year. During the summer the walls and carcasses were covered with bluebottles and smaller flies. The drone of hoverflies could be heard outside the yard gates.

The meat from those yards was sold in the butcher shops in the principal streets. Because of the concealed position of those yards, diseased animals could be slaughtered, dressed and sold as sound meat from a healthy beast.

Any family having a yard near their house usually reared pigs for slaughter in the bacon factories; there was a good profit from this work. The main incentive lay in getting a large sum of money on the sale of the pigs rather than mere wages

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

doled out weekly. In this manner about seven thousand milk-fed pigs were sent to the bacon factories each year.

There were four bacon factories in the city; they were family concerns and were owned by Henry Denny and Sons, Malcolm Shaw and Sons, Mattersons, and James O'Mara and Sons. The blood from these factories was collected daily and sent out to a water mill on the Groody river where it was dried in open concrete tanks, ground into powder and exported as blood manure. The four Companies also combined in maintaining a breeding station for pedigree sows and boars, near the watermill.

A branch line of the G.S. & W. railway crossed the Roxboro Road into Shaw's factory and ran across Mulgrave Street to the Pig Market, and from there into Denny's factory in Cathedral Place. Pig-buyers attended fairs throughout the country and sent pigs on to Limerick by rail. In this manner pigs arrived direct into the Pig Market and factories. The products of these factories were world famous for their quality. This was due to the variegated diet of the pigs: one firm claiming in its advertisements that its pigs were milk-fed bacon. One humorous advertisement showed a squalling baby seated on a rug and a bonham happily guzzling the milk from the child's feeding bottle.

Each factory killed about three hundred to six hundred pigs per day. O'Mara's is the only one of these bacon factories still producing bacon in Limerick. The others have closed down or changed ownership or switched to other products. The closure of these factories was mainly due to restrictive legislation which diverted the pigs to micro factories all over the country. A financial burden on the Limerick Bacon factories was the compulsory employment of droves of Government inspectors whose salaries were met by a reduction in the price paid for pigs and an increase in the price of bacon. The producer and the consumer were unable to bear this burden and the bacon industry declined.

THE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT

As in all cities the rich and poor alike could enjoy the pleasure of seeing some splendid public monuments and other picturesque views. Limerick city fared better than most in this regard. The view from Honan's Quay towards the Clare Hills took in the Thomond Bridge, King John's Castle, and St. Mary's Cathedral, with the Curragour Falls in the foreground. There were many other famous views of the surrounding country from different parts of the city. During the summer one could meet at least six artists seated at various points sketching these many scenes. All of these things gave pleasure and unconscious pride to the citizens, but the greatest binding force was the community of interest in music. The circus coming on its annual visit had its own band of musicians who, seated on long cars led the parade through the city.

The Recruiting Sergeant preceded by a military band lured many a witless youth to a life of ease and a pensioned old age in the British Army, though all did not fare so well.

The six Cinemas and the Theatre Royal had each its own orchestra of Violins and piano. As the cinemas were denounced from the pulpit by the clergy as occasions of sin they must be recorded. The Abbey cinema near Barrington's Hospital, and the Tivoli, directly across the river near Baals

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Bridge, charged 2d and 4d admission for the evening performances and half-price during the daily matinees. There was no cinema tax to pay. The Athenaeum in Cecil Street, the Grand Central in Bedford Row, with the Coliseum and the Gaiety in O'Connell Street, charged 6d and 9d, and 1s. admission. The tariff in the Theatre Royal ranged from two pence in 'The Gods' to a half-crown elsewhere and ten shillings in the boxes. The Theatre Royal was a death trap in the event of a fire.

The city had three brass and reed bands and as many fife and drum bands. They gave occasional concerts in the park and in St. John's Square. They gave life and colour to the many annual processions and sporting events in the city. Mungret College had a brass band and many a priest going on foreign mission work lugged his brass trumpet to Timbucktoo

A FISHY TALE

It isn't every day that a businessman stands up and openly welcomes price increases. The logical reaction must be that he is doing well out of these increases when he says: "I think it is a small price to pay as a nation to arrest the economic position", then his motives must be seriously questioned.

However, when the same businessman appears in a national magazine "urging people to be aware of other points of view", it lends further intrigue to the mystery.

But when the businessman in question happens to be a Mr. Pat Mortell, of 49 Roches Street, then the mystery begins to clear up. He is a member of the well-known Cork family of fish merchants.

His "welcome price increases" comment came in the *Limerick Weekly Echo* (Sat. 14th Dec.) when he said "if we spend £4 million per week on drink what is 14% on petrol?"

No thought then for the lower-paid and the struggling working people who are faced with weekly price increases. However, seeing that Mortell is the owner of a delicatessen catering for the middle classes it might explain his ignorance of the plight of workers.

It was ironic therefore to see him popping up in a recent edition of *Hibernia* praising Fr. James Good for his recent Blessed Oliver Plunkett article. But, then, few Limerick workers read *Hibernia*, so Mortell's inconsistency passed unnoticed.

"All peoples need some sort of an anchor to prevent them being carried away in their own hysteria. Thank goodness for the few who are brave enough to make us aware of the other point of view ..." he wrote.

An anchor ... for prices?

The other point of view? What about those price increases? Haven't the working people a point of view? What about that? Welcoming prices increases, Mr. Mortell? Try explaining that to the long queues outside the Labour Exchange just up the road from your delicatessen ...

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or other places and by his musical ability may have saved himself from the cannibals' cooking pot.

There were in all about two hundred professional musicians in the city whose sole means of livelihood was their musical ability. The city was graced with occasional visits of operatic companies. The Ester Grimes and Moody Manners groups were regular visitors. The visiting companies always received a warm welcome at 'Strand House' the residence of the O'Mara family. This family founded the O'Mara Opera Company. All the family had musical ability and were splendid singers. The leading tenor Joe O'Mara had an international reputation as an outstanding performer.

Street musicians played the accordeon flute or fiddle. The playing of bagpipes was the exclusive right of the blind. These wierd sounding instruments could be bought from pawnbrokers who had accepted them in pledge from members of Scottish regiments stationed at various times in the city. The British regiments in the city had their own bands and gave weekly concerts in the 'New' Barracks and in the People's Park. They also travelled enroute marches around the city. During performances in the barrack the public were free to enter the place where seats were provided. The public were free to enter any of the four military barracks on any trivial excuse. Other than an occasional drunken brawl, prefect harmony existed between the civilian population and the occupying military. This easy-going state of affairs existed until 1918 when a notice was nailed to all gates of the barracks: 'Owing to the treachery of certain of his Majesty's subjects all persons and vehicles entering or leaving this barrack must be searched'.

The Milkman, the baker, the butcher, and the pigman removing 'swill' all were doubly searched. Despite these precautions, petty trafficking in arms and ammunition continued. The military no longer gave concerts and admission to any barrack was restricted. Brass bands and public concerts, though greatly appreciated, could not be turned on at will, nor could they be brought into people's houses. Gramophones met this need. The wealthy had cabinet models and horned models were available for others. The maestros and great singers of the day were now on tap: McCormack, Caruso, and others could be heard bellowing from the lanes and streets, the instruments having no volume control.

The pop songs or people's choices of the day lay in the following order: Mother Macree, Danny Boy, Terry My Blue Eyed Irish Boy, Peggy O' Neill, and God Save The King. The latter was to be heard in some homes of the wealthy and in the homes of some clever patriots.

(To be continued).

Doctors and Money

From Page 3.

euphemisms also help to keep his fellow doctors in their lucrative business. But that would be giving the game away on an integral part of the work of the medical profession. And Dr. Conway need not look further than the pages of the *Irish Medical Times* to find a whole collection of euphemisms in the articles and large advertisements from the monopoly multinational drug companies.

It cannot be denied that many doctors do difficult and onerous jobs, have irregular working hours, including night calls, and that the earnings and hours of duty of junior doctors have appeared to be out of line with their senior colleagues. But few can deny that almost all consultants and doctors in Southern Ireland already make enough money to qualify as members of the privileged, powerful elite at the top echelons of our society. Despite all the professional clap-trap and medical hocus pocus surrounding the present dispute with the Minister for Health, the essence of the matter is that the doctors are seeking to further enrich themselves at the expense of the rest of the community.

The Coalition Government

The Fine Gael/Labour Government has now had two years in office, more than enough time to assess its performance and how it has lived up to the promises made prior to the February 1973 general election. It might be best to approach the Government's performance in terms of each of the important areas of the political spectrum, and at the end put forward a general summing-up.

The North: Garret FitzGerald is meant to be the spokesman here. He confines himself to very occasional, very general remarks which are remarkable for their sheer lack of content. Conor Cruise O'Brien, on the other hand, who entered the Coalition with a sophisticated and progressive view of the Northern situation, has gradually had to accommodate himself to the non-policy on the North which is now the official Government policy. The style of Cosgrave's conservative and uninspiring leadership was revealed tellingly in the attempt by Minister for Justice, Cooney, to float a progressive balloon on the theme of deleting Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution which was, however, quickly burst in a matter of days after some murmurs of Fianna Fail opposition. The necessary re-education of the 26 Counties population on the realities of the Northern situation has been put decisively on the long finger.

Labour: There is no need to labour (sorry!) the point that the Government has failed dismally in the vital area of maintaining, and creating, employment. The high cost of imports has been a predominant factor in producing the present high level of unemployment and short-time working — but steps could have been taken (and of course should have been taken by Labour Minister O'Leary) to protect jobs. Quotas should have been put on imports of foreign cars, shoes, textiles, etc. The banks should have been forced to bail out (at low rates) industries which were caught unawares by the cash flow problem. In general there should have been a much more alert Government stance in regard to the sensitive areas of the economy from the outset of the twin attack of high cost imports and spiralling inflation.

Finance: In many ways, the most crucial area, and one that has been consistently mishandled. Ryan has delivered three Budgets in the past twenty months and all of them did the wrong things at the wrong time. Heavy reliance on foreign borrowing in a year in which interest rates reached all-time record levels is indicative of the 1973 failure. The 1974 Budget — which should have certainly tried to dampen inflation — did precisely the reverse by introducing no indirect taxation. This directly led to the next one (January 1975) which, of course, substantially increased indirect taxation (drink, cigarettes, betting). There has been throughout acute evidence of extemporising (e.g. the 15p increase in petrol introduced last December). Further evidence of the lack of any real policy has been the complete capitulation of the Government before the massed representatives of the wealthy. The Farmer's tax, Wealth tax and Capital Gains tax have all been provided with such high exemption limits as to make their effectiveness nil. Indeed, they may turn out to be a negative cost to the economy in that the cost of administration may exceed the revenue derived from these (at present) ineffectual pieces of legislation.

Health: One of the worst health services in the Western world has not been improved by the efforts of the Coalition Government. Minister Corish not only lacks ideas — but has run into a brick wall in the shape of that most conservative bastion of Irish society (more conservative indeed than Mother Church herself) — the medical profession (motto "What we have we hold"). As Noel Browne before him discovered, the nation's much-loved doctors serve nobody better than themselves.

On a related matter, the contraception debacle must be included under this heading as another of the Coalition's inept failures. More than failure indeed, the defeat of Cooney's bill (in itself, inadequate, but at least a step forward) underlined

AFTER TWO YEARS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT by JOHN BOYLE

the essential contradictions of the Labour/Fine Gael Coalition. (These contradictions are, however, beginning to resolve themselves — the resolution being that Labour policies as such are being quietly discarded).

Industry & Commerce: The bailiwick of Mr. Justin Keating. This man has unquestionably been one of the biggest disappointments of all the Labour Ministers. His sellout of the Navan mineral rights to foreign capital at bargain basement rates, allied to his despicable defence of same as in some way consistent with his "socialist" policies, merely sets the seal on Keating's conversion from socialist to pragmatist. His scornful attitude, allied to his considerable intellectual qualities, make him truly one of the most formidable obstacles in the attempt to promote real political alternatives to the Irish people.

Other Areas: Housing is probably the most important of these. Tully's ostensible attempts to promote local authority housing at the expense of private development is commendable in theory, but unreliable in practice and has led to fairly high levels of unemployment in the private house-building sector. Burke's clericalist views on education thoroughly justify Northern Protestants' suspicions of our society. Peter Barry is an inept Minister for Transport & Power: his handling of the oil crisis and the Bantry spillages do not inspire confidence. Minister for Defence Donegan is a hard-working buffoon, but his militarist tendencies make him a dangerous man to be put in charge of something so ambiguous as our "defence".

Finally, we come to Posts & Telegraphs and Conor Cruise O'Brien. The only really relevant area here is that of broadcasting. Here one has to find in favour of the Minister. His recent legislation on Section 31 attempts democratically to cope with the problems associated with the free diffusion of I.R.A. propaganda by sympathetically inclined broadcasters. To the extent that Ministerial orders in this domain are to be subject to Dail debate, to this degree the Minister has had the courage of his convictions and there can be little doubt but that O'Brien will be well able to cope with Blaney and his ilk who would attempt to wave banners proclaiming their liberalism in their efforts to promote the I.R.A. view. For people outside the Pale another vital area that the Minister controls is the future of multi-channel viewing. Here again the Minister is to be commended in pushing ahead with his plans to re-broadcast B.B.C. 1 — which is the clear democratic wish of the majority of those in the single-channel areas. He has had to contend, of course, with a vociferous lobby of Gaelgoiri and Dublin-based intellectuals (including the majority of T.V. critics), all of whom can pontificate at length on what the rest of the country should be viewing, whilst they of course have the luxury of three or four T.V. channels to choose from.

Final Verdict: It is evident that despite the few plus marks that can be chalked up for the Coalition, the overwhelming conclusion is that the Government has failed almost totally to deliver of the promises made before the last General Election. As regards the Labour Party, it is clear that the Party in Government has been a singular disappointment even to its most partisan supporters. Nationalisation of building land banks, mines — who hears of these once familiar demands now from the leaders of the Labour Party? All is compromise — though as Justin Keating would no doubt argue, that's politics. It may well be politics as we know them in our capitalist society, but the search for a socialist alternative must go on regardless — and on the evidence of the Coalition's first two years, the task must be carried on outside of the arena provided by the Irish Labour Party.

HELD OVER

We regret that owing to pressure of space the fifth part of "The Parish Pump" and the concluding part of "Education: A Reply To Dr. Newman" have been held over to next month.